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# THE NEW YORK LATIN LEAFLET

Entered at the Post Office in Brooklyn as second-class matter, October 29, 1900

25 Issues  
One-half of  
Every Subscription  
goes into the  
Scholarship Fund

VOL VII

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, OCT. 22, 1906

No 154

## LATIN CLUB LUNCHEON

Nineteenth Meeting of the Latin Club—Nov 10, 1906

Mr J Edmund Barss of The Hotchkiss School will address the club on the subject: "The Teaching of Latin Prose Composition", at the Hotel Marlborough, Thirty-sixth Street and Broadway, New York City. We shall sit down promptly at 12 M. Seats will be reserved for those holding tickets (see announcement regarding tickets on p 3), others should be sure to notify THE LATIN LEAFLET, 179 Marcy Ave, Brooklyn, by postal card, if intending to be present. ATTEND TO THIS MATTER NOW.

### A CORRECTION

Dr R B Steele desires to make the following change in the middle of the first paragraph of article in Nov 151 of *The Leaflet*: "had" should have read "could have".

### AMERICAN CLASSICISM

Our American classicism, whether we compare it with that of the time of Quintilian, or with the age of Donatus, Servius, St Augustine, of Bede, of Eginhard, of the Humanists, or of our European contemporaries, our own classicism, I say, exhibits a curious top-heaviness, which indeed is quite *sui generis*.

It is not this feature of it, that Greek has reached—almost—the vanishing point in the intellectual and educational perspective of America: it is not the curious over-production of grammars, of which one might say, with Erasmus: *Quot grammatici tot grammaticae*. No, this top-heaviness is something else. An over-cultivation of specialization at the top, with a stunted life in the college period, and grave deficiencies in what we generally call the preparatory period, that of the high school quadriennium.

It is this with which I desire to deal in this article. In the earliest stages of classical instruction, there is a curious unchangeableness of matter and manner. When we consider the splendid individualism of personal initiative, and of original ideas in the entire sphere of material pursuits and of industrial enterprises, so characteristic of the United States, we pause in marvelling here. Graduate studies in classics, college reading, too, and the wider professional range and training of those entrusted with this branch of the work—all these

have greatly benefited by the stimulus of European achievements and standards. The publishing, indeed, from time to time, of translations of German annotated editions has been a painful, and not at all necessary, avowal of inferiority, due to the lack of wide reading.

But our high school quadriennium has remained substantially untouched by such influences. The American child begins mathematical pursuits upon the very threshold of school and schooling, and never really lays them aside, if it goes on into high school work, say to its eighteenth or nineteenth year. Not so with Latin. Rarely is Latin begun before fourteen, and then, in one year, say of nine months, the pupil is to acquire the groundwork of a tongue which has genders, but no article, which expresses time and mood without our auxiliaries in the main, the case forms of which also connote a multitude of what in English speech are prepositional relations. In the feverish hurry to "get into Caesar" the process of familiarization with the teeming mass of phenomena of inflexion is ill done. Pupils subsequently learn much as to the functions of the subjunctive, for example, while they are unable to utter the forms of the same.

The tremendous artificiality of Latin versification, with relations widely torn apart and remote, due to the exigencies of quantitative metre, this demands categorically a recognition of inflectional relations which by a modern learner can be acquired only by incessant practice of compound inflection. It is not generally known that in the Roman schools the pupil declined nouns *a/ways* with *hic* or *haec* or *hoc*, that the subjunctives were thus practised: *Si frangerem, si frangeres*, etc. or *Ut frangam, ut franges*, etc, accustoming those to whom the Latin speech was vernacular to such organic units from the start. I do not believe that all these things are soundly acquired in the fundamental year with us, to say nothing of genders and numerals. All poetry must be reduced first to a prose order: the testimony of Cicero, of Horace, of Quintilian abundantly proves this: there is not extant any art of reading Latin that can dispense with this. The Roman called is *ordo*. Quintilian says of Roman boys: "Let them learn par-